

# How to Stay Safe



# for Thanksgiving



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An At Home Guide  
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MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES,

FOOD & CONSUMER SAFETY  
SECTION

## Purchasing

Make sure there is ample room in the refrigerator for everything that you plan on storing. Not having adequate room for air circulation may cause foods to not cool properly and may cause mechanical problems in the unit.

Consider all the space that will be needed to store frozen and refrigerated items. You should also consider how you will keep foods hot and cold during mealtime and plan accordingly.



## Handwashing

Handwashing is the most effective way to ensure that food contamination does not occur. You should wash your hands before food preparation begins, when switching between foods, after handling raw meats, or whenever your hands get dirty.



To properly wash your hands, turn the faucet to as hot as you can handle. Use plenty of soap and lather hands for a minimum of 15 seconds. Rinse your hands, and use a paper towel or your elbow to turn off the faucet. Dry your hands completely. Proper hand drying kills as many germs as soap does!

## Thawing

Turkeys should only be thawed in the refrigerator, in the microwave, or under cold running water; never on the counter. The first three methods allow the turkey to keep a safe temperature throughout, while the last does not.

You should keep in mind that using your refrigerator may take three to four days, depending on what temperature you keep the refrigerator at and how big the bird is.



It is important to remember not to rinse the turkey before cooking, as rinsing will only spread bacteria.

## Safe Preparing

Use different cutting boards for vegetables and different cuts of meat. If multiple boards are not available, thoroughly wash the boards between uses.



Storing foods that will not be cooked (served as is) should be stored at the top of the refrigerator. Raw meats should be stored according to cook temperatures.

For example, a vegetable tray and pie would be stored at the top of the refrigerator, raw beef and raw eggs would be stored in the middle, and the turkey and other poultry would be stored at the bottom.

## Cooking

The amount of time it takes to cook your turkey will depend on the size of the bird. A meat thermometer should be used to ensure that the entire turkey reaches **165° F**.

The thermometer should be used in three places:

1. Innermost part of the thigh
2. Innermost part of the wing
3. Thickest part of the breast.



Slow cooking or partially cooking the turkey should be avoided. If possible, cook the stuffing separately.

Serve hot foods promptly after cooking to ensure that the food remains safe.

## Leftovers

Leftovers should be put away within 2 hours of eating. As with storing food before the feast, make sure there is ample room for air flow to ensure that everything cools properly. Store leftovers in small, shallow containers.

Leftovers should be consumed within 3 days, or moved to the freezer.

Leftovers should always be reheated to at least **165° F**, and gravy should be brought to a boil before serving.

